

2 Richmond Planning Commission
3 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FOR September 16, 2020
4

Members Present: Chris Cole, Scott Nickerson, Virginia Clarke, Chris Granda, Alison Anand
(joined at 8:05 pm), Mark Fausel,
Members Absent: Joy Reap, Jake Kornfeld, Brian Tellstone,
Others Present: Ravi Venkataraman (Town Planner/Staff), Marianne Barnes, Fran
Thomas, Marshall Paulsen, Cathleen Gent, Ryan Ackley, Marianne
Kittenger, Kevin Kittenger
5

6
7 Chris Cole opened the meeting at 7:05 pm.
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9 **2. Adjustments to the Agenda**

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11 None
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13 **4. Public Comment for non-agenda items**
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15 Marshall Paulsen said he is here to observe and thanked the commission for letting him sit in. Ravi
16 Venkataraman asked Cole for a roll call of all persons present. Marianne Barnes, Fran Thomas,
17 Marshall Paulsen, Cathleen Gent, Ryan Ackley, Marianne Kittenger, and Kevin Kittenger introduced
18 themselves for the record.
19

20 **3. Approval of Minutes**
21

22 Motion by Mark Fausel, seconded by Virginia Clarke to approve the September 2, 2020 Planning
23 Commission Meeting Minutes.
24

25 Discussion: Committee members discussed the procedure for approving the minutes, and whether
26 members needed to have attended the meeting to approve the minutes. Clarke stated that Fausel
27 attended but the minutes didn't list him as present.
28

29 Fausel amended the motion to approve the minutes with the edit that Mark Fausel attended the
30 meeting, seconded by Clarke. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.
31

32 **3. Public Hearing: Requirements for property owners claiming exemption per 24 V.S.A. §4413**
33 **(12:12)**
34

35 Venkataraman overviewed the basis of the proposed zoning amendments. Clarke said that the
36 amendments are a clarification to the requirements by adding additional details, without providing
37 additional rights or taking away rights.
38

39 Motion by Fausel to move to finalize the changes to Town Zoning Regulations Sections 1.2, 2.4.5, 5.1,
40 and 5.10.4 and direct staff to distribute copies of the amendment proposal to the Selectboard, seconded
41 by Chris Granda. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.
42

43 **4. Discussion on rezoning the southern portion of the Richmond Village (15:45)**

44 **a) Discussion with Richmond Historical Society**

45 Cole provided background on the ongoing discussions the Planning Commission has had on rezoning
46 the Village, and the locations the commission is focusing on. Cole said that the commission is currently

47 seeking input to guide its work, especially the Historical Society's input as the commission determines
48 how to rezone the southern portion of the village. Fran Thomas said based on discussions the Historical
49 Society had, protecting the Round Church, the viewshed of the Round Church, and the areas
50 surrounding the Round Church is vital to ensure that the church is in an appropriate setting. Thomas
51 said that certain properties near the Round Church are not single-family homes, and expressed concern
52 about changes to the facade of multifamily use properties—as evidenced with structures that have been
53 recently altered along Main Street. Thomas said that the properties adjoining the Round Church are in
54 character with the church, and would not want to see zoning changes that would affect the character of
55 the area as a village setting around the Round Church. Ryan Ackley supported Thomas's comments,
56 adding that he moved to Richmond for its setting, and that locals and visitors alike appreciate
57 Richmond's setting. Cole brought up the Planning Commission's previous discussions on allowing
58 mixed use properties, and commercial properties that are in line with the character of the area, and
59 current questions on the character of the area in order to find ways to balance growth with the existing
60 character of the area. Thomas said that the creation of a historic district could be one way to protect the
61 character of the area, in terms of uses and structures. Clarke asked if there were businesses in the
62 vicinity of the Round Church. Thomas said she was unsure, would have to look into it, but added that
63 she is aware that the vicinity of the Round Church used to be the center of Richmond until the railroad
64 was built and the center of town moved to where it is currently. Thomas said that since that shift, the
65 character of the area has been residential, and that her neighbors are trying to rehabilitate their building
66 to its original state while converting the single-family use to two units. Clark asked if the appearance of
67 the structure was of a higher priority than the use. Thomas said from a Historical Society point-of-view,
68 yes, and that in her opinion, she has reservations about buildings hosting multiple uses without the
69 owner occupying the building, which changes the look of the area. Clarke mentioned the county-wide
70 housing shortage. Thomas acknowledged the housing needs. Cole said that the Planning Commission
71 has been trying to grapple with the needs of the town while balancing the character of the town by
72 engaging with the public, and summarized Thomas's input about protecting aesthetics and preventing
73 uncharacteristic uses. Thomas affirmed Cole's summary, adding that certain commercial uses could be
74 allowed that are compatible with the area. Clarke asked if the Historical Society discussed the
75 commercial area containing Stone Corral Brewery. Thomas said the society did not, adding that that
76 commercial area is outside of the viewshed of the Round Church. Thomas said that she anticipates
77 development in the developable portion of the Farr property, and that she would appreciate
78 development there that is done tastefully. Fausel asked the Historical Society the extent of the potential
79 historic district. Thomas identified areas south of the river to Cochran Road. Thomas asked if the
80 Planning Commission has decided on how to rezone Main Street. Cole said the commission intends to
81 make West Main Street similar to East Main Street, by allowing commercial activities on West Main
82 Street while maintaining the residential character of the area. Thomas said that the appearance of the
83 structures, the amount of traffic generated, and the location of parking would help with determining
84 compatibility. Clarke overviewed the rationale for creating the Residential/Commercial District along
85 East Main Street, and the ongoing discussions on possible upzoning along the primary corridors and the
86 future of commercial use market. Clarke and Thomas further discussed walkability and the need for
87 senior housing. Thomas thanked the commission for the invitation to the Historical Society to participate.
88 Cathleen Gent said that more housing and affordable housing options could be developed in the village
89 but in a manner that reflects existing settlement patterns per the Town Plan, and that she had concerns
90 about a 9 units per acre allowance. Cole asked Gent about how the commission should address
91 upzoning. Gent suggested investigating existing lot sizes. Clarke said Venkataraman provided a map
92 with parcel sizes, and compared potential developability with the existing three units per acre allowance
93 and a six units per acre allowance within the village. Clarke said that redevelopment with additional units
94 if the village is upzoned seems unlikely in the near future. Gent recommended setting limits to promote
95 the commission's vision of the village. Cole concurred, adding that he would like to see more density in
96 the walkable areas of town and citing successful clustered development in town. Alison Anand said that
97 having talked to a village resident recently who said that the village is currently congested that the
98 commission should seek additional feedback from village residents, identify specific areas for upzoning,
99 and widen the scope to relieve existing trafficked areas. Gent recommended that the commission talk to
100 village residents early in the process. Cole said that he would like to take his time with the process and

101 implement policy with care. Clarke said that the commission is investigating opening up allowances area
102 by area. Gent voiced concerns about the draft zoning map showing village mixed use along Thompson
103 Road and Huntington Road. Cole asked why the districts did not align with the parcel boundaries.
104 Fausel suggested it must have been human error. Gent said that Thompson Road did not have the
105 capacity for additional development. Ackley asked if there was a specific target for housing
106 development. Cole said there was not. Clarke said that the Housing Committee may develop targets in
107 the near future. Ackley asked for a definition of a walkable distance. Cole said this was subjective, but in
108 terms of transit, three-quarters of a mile is considered walkable. Ackley asked about redevelopment of
109 Johnnie Brook Road. Fausel said the trail portion of Johnnie Brook Road is an ancient road. Clarke said
110 that in the past, the Highways Department said that it had no intent of redeveloping the roadway, and
111 that Johnnie Brook Road is currently a beautiful trail. John Rankin requested the commission to
112 consider areas outside the village to site future housing. Fausel said that Jonesville had potential for
113 increased development, and that the commission is considering areas south of the river because of the
114 availability of water and sewer service. Cole said that balancing growth while maintaining the character
115 of the area and retaining the existing settlement pattern is a tall task, and asked Venkataraman to
116 provide all the zoning tools the commission can consider to move forward with this task. Clarke said that
117 the Housing Committee will be investigating this further. Fausel said that the Atwood Farm was
118 purchased by a developer and the commission should be having conversations about whether the town
119 wants to allow further development outside the village center.

120

121 **5. Other Business, and Correspondence**

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123 Cole requested that Venkataraman provide a list of zoning tools that municipalities use to
124 increase density. Venkataraman said that it depends on the context and that he could model
125 the southern portion for development for the commission to consider. Clarke said that the
126 Housing Committee will be investigating this further as well. Cole asked how to coordinate
127 the commission's work with the Housing Committee's work. Clarke suggested that
128 additional people provide input. Fausel concurred that additional input is needed, especially
129 from people in West Main Street. Cole suggested creating an outreach schedule. Anand
130 concurred with Cole, and talked about the unpredictability of the current times under Covid.
131 Clarke discussed methods of outreach. Clarke discussed the methods to determine the
132 suitability of uses per area, and carving out zoning districts based on compatible uses. Cole
133 suggested determining the need for the neighborhoods district, and teasing details
134 regarding West Main Street. Cole also said he was unsure about allowing six units per acre
135 in the village, and would like additional information on other zoning tools to create more
136 density in a way that the town has already accepted. Fausel recommended including
137 language for public outreach in the next meeting packet. Cole said he would try to put
138 together language for public outreach for the committee to review.

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140 **6. Adjournment**

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142 Motion by Granda, seconded by Nickerson to adjourn the meeting. Voting: unanimous. Motion carried.

143 The meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm.

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145 Respectfully submitted by Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner